

**WASHINGTON** – During a meeting today with Rep. DeFazio and other coastal members, NOAA Fisheries Service Director Dr. Bill Hogarth announced that the \$60.4 million in relief funds for fishermen, tribes and businesses affected by the salmon disaster will be distributed over the summer.

During the meeting, Hogarth informed members that the funds will be distributed through the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. Before receiving the funds, the Commission must submit a proposal to NOAA Fisheries on how the funds will be distributed.

The Commission plan will be based on the proposals developed separately by the Oregon Salmon Commission and the California Salmon Council.

Within each state, distribution to fishermen and others will be based solely on the plan approved by that state's salmon commission or council.

After the Commission submits the final proposal to the federal government, which is expected to happen during the week of June 11th, NOAA Fisheries will take four to six weeks for review.

Upon approval, the \$60.4 million in funds will be released to the Commission for distribution to the fishermen, tribes and businesses.

“This disaster aid cannot come too soon for many struggling fishing families, businesses and communities. It has been a long fight to get my colleagues in Congress and the President to approve this assistance. I will continue to work to ensure that this money ends up in the pockets of those who need it most as soon as possible,” said DeFazio.

The \$60.4 million in disaster relief was passed by Congress and signed by the president at the end of May. The funding provision was based on a bill introduced by DeFazio and others in January.

The salmon fisheries disaster was due to irresponsible federal management of the Klamath River, which caused 80,000 adult salmon to die in 2002. Since then, the salmon population has continued to deteriorate, forcing the Pacific Fisheries Management Council to sizably reduce the fishing seasons in 2005 and 2006.

As a result, the commercial fishing season was cut by more than 90 percent last year, costing fishing families and associated fishing businesses more than \$60 million.